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FROM TRUCK BED TO BARE FEET: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF TOURISM

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Abstract

In the summer of 2004, three companions and I set out on an adventure after a month of archaeology work in the northwest jungles of Belize. This essay is not only a loose account of some exploits and misadventures, but it also illustrates how the tourism industry has affected this region. Through my experiences I was able to create a dichotomy of two contrasting countries, Belize and Guatemala, in order to convey how tourism can affect the culture and structure of different societies. Here I present a portrait of how socio-economic changes, complex acculturation, and changes in environmental stability have occurred in these countries as a result of tourism. In this article, I hope to convey the importance of tourism in shaping the host-guest relationship and its relation to ethnographic research.

Introduction

After a month of archaeology work in the Rio Bravo Conservation Area of Northwest Belize, three companions and I left the others to find out if there was more to see in this country than dirt and scorpions and old Mayan pot sherds. It was the summer of 2004 during the rainy season and we made our way by truck bed from the Orange Walk district to the Princess Hotel and Casino in Belize City. We left our luggage and traveled southwest through the Maya mountains until we reached one of the southernmost towns of Punta Gorda. It was here that we picked up our fifth member; a British girl named Alice. We boarded a ferry and made our way across the Straight of Honduras to reach Puerto Barrios, Guatemala and on to the small city of Livingston.

In a conference essay on Nelson Graburn's *The Anthropology of Tourism*, Jonathan Benthall states that Graburn "characterized anthropology as the **highest-status form of tourism** (1988:20)." With this simple claim it is understandable why tourism has become an important topic of study to the field of anthropology. The notion that anthropology can be classified as glorified tourism, rather than a school of thought, is somewhat contemptuous. However, when taken in the context of hierarchal classes of the tourist as described by Graburn (1988:19-21), it is also rather plausible.

On our journey, I experienced the full scope of the impact that tourism can have on a place and its culture. It was through these experiences that I was able to generate a dichotomy of the contrasting countries of Belize and Guatemala; countries which were both affected by the tourism industry in different ways. This dichotomy will illustrate problems surrounding tourism and convey the importance of tourism from an anthropological perspective. As the story unfolds, more implications and more ways in which tourism can affect a region in all aspects of a cultural system will be conveyed; from changes in socio-economic structure, loss of culture, and environmental degradation, to changes in human integrity, views on morality, and overall sustainability.

Concepts of Tourism

The goal of this paper is not to define completely or fully delve into explaining all concepts of tourism and the tourist. The goal of this paper is simply to use life experiences to illustrate different ways in which tourism can affect society. In this article, I also hope to convey the power of tourism and the necessity for the anthropology of tourism. I will, therefore, avoid the stagnation of trying to exponentially define concepts or discuss in depth the philosophical aspects of tourism. For example, Dennison Nash's article, *Tourism as an Anthropological Subject*, suggests that when defining tourism one must think in terms of the motives and practices of the person (tourist). Nash takes us through different motives from sightseeing to traveling. Nash then suggests that tourists are simply people at leisure, which he follows up by trying to discuss the definition of leisure (1981:461-462). Finally, he comes to the conclusion that "one becomes a tourist when one leaves home while free from primary obligations (1981:462)."

In her book, *Host and Guests*, 2nd Edition, Valene L. Smith, defined a tourist as "a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change (1989:1)." She also characterizes tourism into five different types and tourists into seven different forms as well. Smith suggests that the type of tourist is defined by the kinds of "leisured mobility undertaken by the tourist (1989:4)." Her five types of tourism are characterized as *ethnic*, *cultural*, *historical*, *environmental*, and *recreational*. Smith's typologies generate structure in describing key aspects of tourism. In addition, I intend to place myself within her model to provide a frame of reference in the characterization of tourists and tourism. In the remainder of this section I will **briefly** discuss these five forms, as well as the seven types of tourist as characterized by Smith.

Ethnic tourism is based on selling the concept of the charming customs of indigenous, sometimes unusual peoples such as the Massai in Africa or the San Blas Indians of Panama. Traditional art and dance, ceremonies and natural experiences are enticing in these societies which are usually removed from outside influence. "As long as the flow of visitors is sporadic and small, host-guest impact is minimal (1989:4)."

Cultural Tourism is the local scene of a misplaced life-style which just refuses to fade away. Usually a more natural, rural culture, this type sells the "old and homegrown" style. Cultures like the southwest Native American and Balinese are examples of this type in which host-guest stresses can be the greatest due to the flow of people mixing with a traditionally rural culture.

Historical tourism stresses the past. Sites such as the Pyramids of the Mayans and Egyptians and the Coliseum in Rome are examples of this type. Monuments and museums are big attractions in this institutionalized style that caters specifically to the tourist. Host-guest interactions are a constant flow and usually impersonal as the primary goal is monetary.

Environmental tourism is primarily geographic and based on the environment. Tourists tend to be interested in the ethnoecology and the natural beauty of the area. Polynesia, Yellowstone National Park, and the coral reefs in Cozumel are three of an endless number of popular environmental sites on the globe. Host-guest contacts can depend on the location.

The final type of tourism is *recreational tourism*. This is exactly what it sounds like and is described perfectly by Smith as “sand, sea, and sex (p. 5).” Las Vegas, Aspen, and Waikiki are all great examples of destinations that are structured to handle mass flows of people. The sports, spas, gambling, and entertainment all attract the tourist looking for the alternate “away-from-home, anything-goes” mentality. Host-guest interaction is at a maximum and defines the social structure.

Smith continues in discussing the paradox of the tourism culture and the gentle balance of the relationship between host and guest. “To a host population, tourism is often a mixed blessing: the tourist industry creates jobs and increases cash flow but the tourists themselves can become a physical as well as social burden, especially as their numbers increase (1989:11).”

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY OF TYPES OF TOURISTS AND THEIR ADAPTATIONS TO LOCAL NORMS

<i>Type of Tourist</i>	<i>Number of Tourists</i>	<i>Adaptations to Local Norms</i>
Explorer	Very Limited	Accepts fully
Elite	Rarely Seen	Adapts fully
Off-beat	Uncommon but seen	Adapts well
Unusual	Occasional	Adapts somewhat
Incipient Mass	Steady flow	Seeks Western amenities
Mass	Continuous influx	Expects Western amenities
Charter	Massive arrivals	Demands Western amenities

Hosts and Guests, 2nd Edition, Valene L. Smith, 1989, p. 12.

Smith characterized the types of tourists with regard to volume, goals, and how they adapt to the local standards (Table 1). According to Smith’s classifications, Graburn’s characterization of anthropology stated in the introduction would place anthropology in the *explorer* category. Whereas an anthropologist would be considered an *explorer*, a group branded with name tags and Hawaiian shirts would be *charter tourists*. My companions and I would be considered the *off-beat tourist* participating in a mix of *cultural*, *environmental*, and *recreational* tourism.

“You Better Belize It!”

We woke at around 6:30am on the first day. We stocked our bags with canned tuna and granola bars from the camp’s mess hall and began saying our goodbyes to what had become our home in the wild. We drug our bags to the road and piled them up in the back of a rusty, old Ford diesel pickup truck. I settled down on a large spare tire in the back and stretched my legs out to keep from losing my luggage. We made our way northeast under the tropical summer sun through the Orange Walk District from the Rio Bravo Conservation Area. We saw truckload after truckload of huge stalks of sugar cane. Sugar cane trucks run 24 hrs a day and create the 2nd largest industry of Belize, next to tourism.

We reached Belize City and left our luggage at the Princess Hotel and Casino with the intention of returning on our way back to the States. We caught a green school bus the same day and traveled southwest until we connected with the Hummingbird highway that took us through the Maya Mountains and south to the Toledo District.

After an intense bus ride in monsoon rain, we found ourselves in the town of Punta Gorda. We hunted around for a place to stay and we had our first encounter with a local “guide.” A man in his mid-20s with long dreadlocks and a British accent tried to help us find a good hotel room. However, we quickly discovered that when he walked into the hotels, the price would rise. It was their form of advertising. Guides would keep the tourists from roaming the streets and they would receive kickbacks from the hotels when they would bring tourists. The tourists end up paying higher prices. But, if the tourists would rather roam the streets, see the area, or find their own hotel, they would have a hard of doing it without being hassled. We lost our “guide” in the streets, but he eventually caught up with us. Knowing he couldn’t follow all of us, we split up and began racing from hotel to hotel looking for a place he had not been yet.

We came to the St. Charles Inn and got a room that resembled more of a cubicle than a hotel room. The town was asleep for the most part. Having not eaten all day, we began to look for a place to eat. Most places were either closed or out of business. Just as the rain began to pick up again, we found a small house with a covered front porch. The dirty chalk board read “Garnuchos, 2 for \$3, Fried Chicken, Big Plate \$5.” I ordered the big chicken plate and we sat down with our ice cold Belikins (official beer of Belize) and waited for a small elderly woman to cook our orders in her bright sea green kitchen.

The woman’s son came out, sat down with us, and popped open his own beer. He was tall and in his late 20s. His name was Cesar and he was very cordial and polite and seemed very interested in us. He gave us the

inside scoop on good places to go in Guatemala. He advised us not to go to Livingston. Cesar was a very prominent, successful, and well-respected narcotics dealer. In this culture, his was a respectable and important occupation. His two-year-old daughter came out and sat with him and we drank and ate his mother's wonderful cooking as the rain came down. This was one of those moments you look for when you travel. Time stops and everything is forgotten except for every piece of the moment.

The next morning we met some Europeans at the ferry dock that had the same destination. We boarded a \$1.50 ferry that would take us from Punta Gorda, Belize, to Puerto Barrios, Guatemala and on to the small city of Livingston, which was the jump off point of the Rio Dulce River. The ferry was a tarp-covered, hollowed out speed boat with benches and twin 75hp motors. It was at this dock that we gained the fifth member of our group, a freckled British girl named Alice. After what seemed to be hours of fighting off large ocean sized waves, we made it across the Straight of Honduras to Puerto Barrios where we would exchange money and board another (hopefully shorter) ferry.

The Guatemalan Experience

We docked in Puerto Barrios and were instantly assaulted by all manner of Spanish tongue imaginable. Not proficient in Spanish, it was like a monsoon of words and phrases that penetrated my skull until my brain throbbed. We escaped the mob and rushed down the streets crowded with Crush, Pepsi, and Texaco signs from the 1980s.

We took care of our passport business and walked to a bank that resembled any bank in the U.S. However, as we walked, I began to notice the BIGGEST difference from the U.S. and Belize: GUNS. Everyone carried guns. It was like being in the Wild West. Watchmen on street corners carried AR-15 and AK-47 assault rifles; while the average Joe might just carry a .45 automatic at his side. The bank had a small window where people would check their guns and keep their ammunition when they walked in.

"Urbanization in the Caribbean Basin: Social Change during the Years of Crisis" gives insightful information about Guatemala's social and economic stability. Written in 1994 by Alejandro Portes, Jose Itzizsohn, and Carlos Dore-Cabral, this essay classifies the country's political regime as an "unstable restricted democracy (1994:11)."

They state that "Guatemala has lagged behind most of its neighbors in establishing export-assembly industries and in developing tourist infrastructure. Prolonged political instability and generalized violence have conspired against successful investments in either sector (1994:16)." This statement was made 10 years ago, however, it is still relevant today. Tourism of local Mayan ruins has aided the economy, but it is still extremely weak. It is still plagued by violence and political unrest. Many citizens openly carry guns in larger cities and machetes in more rural areas. Adding the element of tourists into this equation of economic distress and violent political unrest is often quite negative, which my companions and I would soon discover.

The city of Livingston overflowed with culture. Here we met a mix of Mestizo, Hispanic, and predominantly Garifuna people. The Garifuna were descendants of African slaves, either escaped or shipwrecked, who mixed with the local Mayan population. They more resembled a Caribbean culture rather than the Latin culture found in the rest of the country. They depended on fishing, coffee, sugarcane, and fruits, before tourism. Soccer is very important, which is apparent in game spectacles in the town square at sunset. The intense drumming and punta dance are heavily advertised and have become quite an attraction. Bar Ubafu had nightly drumming sessions for the tourists that incorporated various hand-drummers from around the city.

As we stepped off the boat we were met by "guides" similar to the one we encountered in Punta Gorda, but more aggressive. We could see them from the boat; sizing us up and sharpening their teeth. Their next meal consisted of young, white tourists that had lots of money. In the same respect, we sat in wait with rocks in our hands ready to grind those teeth down. Subconsciously we knew what to expect and in a way, that was part of the adventure. Unfortunately for us, we only **appeared** to have money. These people didn't know that; therefore, we were still targets. These guides had developed their own industry within the tourism culture that relied completely on interactions with the tourists. If a tourist had enough money, everything would be smooth sailing. When the boats dock, the guides rush the boat to help off the tourists, hoping they get a big spender. They give high fives and hugs and handshakes and tell the tourists "I respect for you." I don't know how many times I heard that phrase.

As Ron O'Grady states in his book, *Tourism in the Third World*, "The host community is persuaded that tourism will bring the blessings of employment and of foreign funds and promote the development of natural resources—all for the good of the whole community (1982:2)."

In this society, with an exchange rate of 7 quetzals: 1 US dollar, the people believe that the guests are their meal ticket. He goes on to state that nations require adequate infrastructure (communication, travel, sanitation, etc.) to support tourism. He presents the idea that a society needs to be stable so that the coming tourism and guests do not "disturb the local conditions," but do not define them as well.

O'Grady also states that "poorer nations lack this infrastructure. They are asked to make the leap from a predominantly rural-based economy into a service-oriented tourist nation without passing through an intermediate stage of industrialization (1982:3)."

Despite our determination to see the place on our own, we were followed by a very persistent guide who called himself "Alexander the Great." He insisted on helping us find a hotel room, but of course, he would get a kickback and the price would rise. That was the system here; and if you had enough money then you wouldn't have any problems. However, my party was on the "shoe string budget." We told him that we had found a hotel already, and he attempted to "assist" us in other ways. He lifted his shirt to reveal a marijuana plant tattooed across his entire body. It was only natural for him to offer. But after being ignored for a time, Alexander lost interest and found another set of backpackers that looked like a good meal.

In this culture, which was much more Caribbean than Guatemalan, marijuana and its use was a very crucial cornerstone of society. The predominant religion being Rastafarian, marijuana was used as a means of trade, peace-offering, religious transcendence, and a means of bonding much like a Native American might smoke a peace pipe with another. It was not only accepted but was the cultural norm, in both Guatemala and Belize.

We wandered about for a time; and time always seems longer when it's hot. Finally we came to the Hotel Garifuna, which happened to be the hotel that Alexander was originally pushing on us. One party-member from upstate New York, Nate, sputtered out some broken Spanish with a thick northern accent to a large black woman who sat in the corner of the lobby. The lobby itself seemed to thirst and gasp as the heat rose through the sweltering air. Two small black girls, probably about ten or eleven years old, led us upstairs, giggling while I tried some broken Spanish of my own.

The rooms were cheap and clean and had five beds. It seemed perfect. With a trickle for a shower, it was better than bathing in the jungle. Our room was on the second floor and faced the street and within 30 minutes, it seemed like everyone in the city of 10,000 knew where we were staying. We made sure to lock the door as we left to find food. Food was usually the first thing on our minds at each new destination. We found that it was a good idea while traveling, to eat big meals when we were able because we never knew when we would eat again.

We found an open-air restaurant called the Tiburón Gato. Bright pink and green paint peeled off walls covered in jaguar skins and mounted shark jaws. Nearly everything on the menu was fried. We ate our weight in fried fish and drank ice cold Gaillo (official beer of Guatemala). Around sunset, we walked downhill to the town square. The stands were packed and the men pulverized each other on a concrete soccer court. A charismatic referee jumped around and blew his whistle through his bouncing dreadlocks.

We leaned over a rock wall to get a closer look when we met a short white gentleman probably in his late 40s or 50s. The scar on his face and beat up, brown hat told his adventures and showed his harsh wisdom. He was an Australian man named Jerry and he shared his stories of how he lost a few fingers and gained four bullet holes in Guatemala City. We had already heard horror stories about the county's capital city.

As we talked to Jerry I noticed that across from the soccer court were swing sets for the kids to play on. At first glance it seemed to be a very normal thing to see. However, when I looked closer to the left of those swing sets I saw their city fountain which happened to have three very large crocodiles living in it, right by the kids' swing sets!

The sun began to set and walking around the corner was none other than Alexander the Great. He waved me over and tried to sell me some marijuana I was certain was a pile of dirt wrapped in newspaper. I declined and met back up with my mates. We changed clothes and hung our legs off the walkway to our room. Being made of brick, our room turned into an oven that cooked us even at night. It was just after sunset and the charismatic referee came bouncing up the stairs. Laughing and smiling, he attempted to joke with Alice about being British but she was definitely not in the mood for his humor. His name was Danny and he was the owner of the fine establishment in which we were cooking. He was 30 years old (he looked about 25) and had no wife but a child in Germany. He was from one of the oldest Garifuna families in the area. The town's people respected him to no end and they called him "Tikki Man" or "Tikki Tikki." He also owned the biggest bar, Bar Ubafu, in town as well as a restaurant and touring service. Women adored him and he always seemed to have two women of every ethnicity and nationality on his arms. Danny was one of most successful people in the city and because wealth comes to so few, he helped out his extremely poor community when he was able. He was part of the very small elite group that was really prospering off the industry. The majority of the people lived in shacks and was lucky to get enough from begging to get a meal for the day.

The tourism industry may prosper, but the effects are a great detriment to many people outside the industry. In his article, *The Sociology of Tourism: Approaches, Issues, and Findings*, Erik Cohen explains, "Tourism often becomes an important source of governmental revenue as well (Cleverdon 1979:45-48), which may be one of the reasons why many governments are eager to encourage its rapid development (Cohen 1984:384)." Cohen goes on to say that "while tourism frequently benefits those locals who are directly involved in it, it may cause hardships for the rest of the population (Cohen 1984:384)." Danny was one of those "directly involved."

In Dennison Nash's book, *Anthropology of Tourism*, he states that "advice for expanding tourism was from international agencies such as the U.N. and the World Bank, which were intrigued by its potential for improving the lives of people in the Third World and using tourism to do it (1996:19)." The tourism industry is often viewed by governments as a quick solution to poverty and economic stagnation. As mentioned before, adopting tourism as an industry without the proper infrastructure can be extremely costly. This economic degradation can lead to the unraveling of society and social integrity. When a society decides to sell their culture, they must be prepared so they do not lose it and adopt a new one. Many of these people, have forgotten their own culture and immersed themselves in this new culture of tourism. This problem is known as *acculturation*.

Danny and I talked while the others went inside the room. He invited me to smoke with him in his bungalow on the beach. We walked down the street and around the corner to what seemed like a small wooden box that consisted mostly of covered windows. It was small and humble. There was a hammock and a mattress that lie on the floor. The grey walls were covered in pictures of American girls and Michael Jackson news clippings. His American tennis shoe collection was organized neatly under one window. We talked as he began to get ready for the night. He walked behind a big mounted sheet and began to bathe in a great big metal tub.

He began his pre-night ritual just as any American guy might. He bathed, and laid out his clothes very neatly and covered himself in some cheap American cologne. He walked over to the far wall and unlatched the window cover. It blew open fiercely and I could feel and smell the energy of the coming monsoon. Distant rolling thunder gave the feeling as if there was some sort of black magic blowing in the warm wind.

In Nash's article he lists the costs of tourism to a society. His list includes "environmental degradation, social disintegration, increasing dependence on touristic metropolises, increasing financial deficits, decreasing quality of life, and increasing social inequality (1981:465)." Nash defines acculturation as a "sociocultural change, desirable or not, that results from culture contact (1996:26)."

With the obvious dependence now on the tourism industry and the host- guest relationship, the people here learned and adapted to the tourists. Danny knew exactly how to interact with tourists and what the people wanted.

Around 9 o'clock, Danny and I strolled back up the street. Girls and women giggled and yelled as we walked by. He headed onto his bar and I assured him that I would catch up. My party and I decided to go out around 10:30pm which was quite average for young Americans accustomed to college night life. We had heard the drums coming from Danny's bar. He assured us before that we would never experience drumming like this anywhere. We left and walked down the street; however, by the time we reached the bar, it was closed.

The heat was so intense the next day that it was difficult to do anything in the room besides sleep. We finally got up and decided to wander around. As we wandered, we saw people making souvenirs. We noticed, however, that the bulk of the souvenirs were made by Europeans, ex-patriots, beatnik hippies, and foreigners who had apparently moved here and began making traditional folk art from a culture that really did not belong to them. One can only assume that these groups of people viewed these cultural affects as art and wanted to be apart of it.

Marketing of culture, no matter whose, is very common and is most vital to the tourism industry in many places. The old tradition of the drum rituals and *punta* dancing was enticing and exotic. Danny and the community tapped into that sentiment. The exploitation of traditions such as these is a perfect example of ways that society adapts to meet the wants and needs of the tourist in order to profit. As a result, the culture and traditions themselves tend to suffer and seem devalued.

In her book, *Bali and Beyond*, Shinji Yamashita, discusses "the reconstruction of traditional performance." She describes in vivid detail the Balinese people performing exhibits of traditional *Kecak* and *Kris* dances in Paris, France and discusses the international fame that these traditions have gained as a result. Eventually, the Balinese and people such as Walter Spies began to change and mix the dances and develop new pieces (2003:33-35). Yamashita continues throughout her book to address issues of acculturation and exploitation of tradition by its own people; from "staging paradise" to "commercialization of performing arts." She also suggests that culture in Bali is often viewed as art by other cultures (2003:38).

Traci Arden wrote an essay on Mayan archaeological tourism that asks the question, "Where are the Maya in Ancient Maya Archaeological Tourism?" He pinpoints tourism as the problem suggesting, "One of the strongest factors in the commercialization of the archaeological record is the growing role of tourism in world economies. Archaeological sites and symbols are often used by national tourism agencies to promote their countries (2004:103)." Archaeological sites in Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala have grown in popularity; for around \$10, any average person can climb the Jaguar temple at the site of Lamanai in Belize. This kind of exploitation by its own people is slowly killing many cultures. "A billboard displaying blond tourists drinking beer on a postclassic Maya temple alienates indigenous Maya children from their heritage and reinforces the impression that the ruins are entertainment for wealthy foreigners, not places of cultural meaning and history (2004:111-112)."

It was in the afternoon and once again, Alexander found us. I seemed to be his favorite target. We walked down the beach but keeled back in disgust at the site of brown and green water and all manner filth imaginable. This resembled a landfill more than a beach. Near the end of the day it began to get dark. The clouds of the looming monsoon were finally over head. We called it the "Big Rain" and it began to pour down. We ran to a restaurant to sit on the porch and drink mojitos. After we ate and drank enough, we decided to make a fast break for it but there was no point. The instant we stepped into the rain every inch of our bodies was soaked. We ran through the streets to our hotel stopping to play in the rain; kicking water on each other and laughing out of control. Locals just stared at the stupid Americans that didn't realize the only sewage system was above ground and was cleaned out by monsoon rains. We smelled absolutely foul and felt ridiculous later but I still laugh.

In his book, *Tourism Economics, the Environment and Development*, Clem Tisdell addresses environmental problems. He states, "There can be no doubt that the general trend in the world is towards greater tourist activity and that this will place increasing pressure on existing environments in the world. ...Natural environments in particular can be expected to come under rising pressure as a result of the greater intrusion of man into them. Environmental considerations are likely to be of increasing concern in the planning and development of tourist facilities and areas (2001:14)."

Tisdell also suggests that "tourism may damage the very environment that attracts tourists." Tisdell lists seven different negative environmental effects and examples (2001:21-22). Number five on his list states that "the infrastructure associated with tourism such as buildings, waste disposal, facilities, roads (both needed to accommodate tourists and those servicing tourists) can damage the environment unless well planned." The last effect on his list states that "unwelcome socio-cultural effects can flow from increased foreign tourism (2001:16)." These two effects convey exactly what Livingston suffered as a result of tourism.

My companions and I had become quite familiar with the above ground sewage system that mostly consisted of shallow trenches on each side of the street which flooded during the rainy season. It began to come very clear why the water and shoreline at the beach were brown and green. All the sewage from the city ran from the streets to the shore. The beach was covered in all manner of waste possible. We strolled by shells caked in black tar, leaky bleach bottles, and floating human waste. Packs of mangy dogs followed people around and dug around in old dirty diapers. It was absolutely despicable. The quality of living was extremely low and a touch of lost beauty was visible in the landscape of tropical flowers and remote waterfalls. This was a beautiful place long ago.

Environmental deterioration due to tourism occurs all over the world. "I beg you, please don't come to Hawaii. Tourism is killing us; it is literally sucking the life out of us (1995:5)." Puhipau, a Hawaiian activist, was quoted saying this in Jonathon Croall's book, *Preserve or Destroy: Tourism and the Environment*. The Alps, the Mediterranean, and Nepal have all suffered environmental problems solely due to the industry of tourism (1995:7-11).

The rain stopped after some time. Alexander showed up drunk and got into an argument with me over drunken nonsense. Danny strolled around the corner with two women shortly after Alexander broke off the top his beer bottle in order to wave it in my face. Danny scolded him and told him to "go home and stop making enemies." He agreed to help me with my Alexander problem if my party would go on his tour the next day. Our

original plan had been to take a boat up the Rio Dulce River and stay near Lake Izabal. He assured me that he had a boat and could take us up the river.

The next morning we set out on our tour at 9:30am. We started out at Danny's restaurant to eat breakfast (not included in the tour price). We walked all over Livingston and saw some incredible things. The only problem was that our goal was to lie in boat going up river, not trek around in one hundred degree weather. We realized when we reached the river docks and walked right by that he, in fact, did not have a boat. I told my mates that he assured me he did and they instantly confronted him. They argued for a while and Danny's happy carefree attitude went away. We assured him we'd pay him for the time he had spent with us and we finished our own tour. Being too late now to catch a REAL ride up the river, we continued on to the Seven Alters, a series of seven interconnected waterfalls and fresh water pools. We jumped from cliffs and swung from hanging vines. The water was perfect and the scurrying crabs and fish were quite entertaining.

When we returned to the hotel, Danny was waiting. We settled the money issue of the previous conflict. The smile came back to his face as he asked if I had some smoke for him as a piece offering. I told I did not but he did convince us to stay another night. That night we decided that we didn't want to make anymore enemies, so we stayed in and drank rum and played card games. Eventually, the liquor and the heat took hold of us and he we were out.

When I woke at around 6:00 am, my stomach churned to find my sandals and backpack were missing, along with Bryan's (Colorado) shoes and Alice's mini disc player. I knocked on Danny's bungalow door and yelled, "We got big trouble, Danny!" I implored Danny to help us and he seemed concerned but didn't even tell us where the police station was. He insisted that the lady working at the hotel ran it and although he knew everyone and everything about Livingston, he could not help us. When I came to him after being robbed at his hotel, his care-free, Caribbean façade went away as if someone flicked a switch. I sat on the verge of vomiting in the shoddy police station as my friend tried his best to describe my lost articles. My cash, my passport, and my journal from the trip had all been in my backpack.

I returned to the hotel and gathered what clothes and affects I had left into a white trash bag. My mates donated cans of food, money, knives, and a Spanish dictionary to me. They found the next bus to Guatemala City where it would take about 5 days-2 weeks to get a new passport at the U.S. Embassy. After all the horror stories, I was about to go there without being able to speak Spanish. But as I walked out the door not knowing what would happen, a lady came up holding what looked like a passport wrapped in toilet paper. She said that she had found it right in front of the gate to the hotel and, sure enough, it was mine.

The majority of people we interacted with in Livingston seemed quite desperate and determined. People seemed to push or force services on the guests rather than offer them. Because tourism was their promised dream of prosperity, they devoted themselves to it completely. They became so reliant on the guest/host relationship that a line was crossed for many from being a server culture to a predatory culture. For basic survival in a poverty stricken society, the hosts will serve the guests until they feel they cannot gain anymore. At that point, the hosts will find any way; usually negative, to prosper off guests whether through begging, conning, pushing drugs, robbery, etc. This is a major problem with tourism across the globe and demands closer scrutiny due its continuous, universal nature. Our experience reinforces O'Grady's statements presented previously. O'Grady also suggests that "to the citizens of these (third world) economic justice is a necessity for sheer survival (1982:15)." If these people do not get their economic justice, they are forced to take it. It was quite interesting when my passport appeared in front of the hotel. Between the hours of 1:00am and 4:00am, someone entered our locked room and later that day returned my passport as if they knew how important it was to me.

I was ecstatically jumping as I walked barefoot to the docks to get out of this country. We passed Danny's bar and he called me in and asked how things turned out. I showed him my passport and he said "most important thing." He gave me his address and we headed to the docks as fast as we could. We found a captain named Jorge and paid him 175 quetzals, which is about \$25 US. He explained that \$100 of the price went to buying immigration papers at the immigration office.

After a long wait at the docks, we finally jumped in Capt. Jorge's boat and we made our way to get gas. While in the water, Capt. Jorge tells us to give him \$175 US and pay for the gas, which was \$5 per gallon. Outraged, we began arguing with him until he somehow no longer spoke or understood English. "No Say, no say, no comprende," was all he said. Eventually, the conflict escalated and we were in the boat wrestling our immigration papers out Capt. Jorge's hands. We took off for the immigration office. After two more hours, we found another captain.

As we left Livingston, smiles and giggles arrived at our excitement to leave. The clouds came out and the water was as smooth as glass. As the rain began to fall, the motor began to die. We were certain that we were cursed. We sat in the rain as the captain fixed the motor and we finally made it back to Punta Gorda.

Back To Belize

We were greeted by our old friend Cesar and we checked back into the St. Charles Inn. He gave us rides and helped finally buy a case of beer and some ice and we lied in our hammocks on the porch and drank our beers. That evening we went to his mother's house and had some more of her fatally delicious fried chicken before we went to sleep. The next day we took a 30 minute boat ride to Placencia, Belize; a small town of around 300 on a smaller peninsula. Much of the town had been wiped away by a hurricane about two years ago. We checked into a small cabin right on the beach. It was absolutely perfect.

Belize had adapted well to the coming tourism. With the proper structure, it was able adapt in many places and rather than completely selling their culture in a touristic routine, they allowed guests to get a glimpse and participate in their culture. In his essay, *Planning for Tourism in Belize*, Douglas G. Pearce states that "the economy has traditionally been based on timber extraction, agriculture, and fishing. In 1980, the gross national product was the equivalent of only US\$900.00. With these economic characteristics, a recent colonial past

(Great Britain), and a reliance on foreign aid as well as other factors, Belize exhibits many features of a developing country (1984:293)."

This essay was written 20 years ago. In that time, Belize has grown over leaps and bounds. Agriculture is still very strong as we consistently saw those sugarcane trucks and banana fields further inland. In Pearce's essay, he maps out the strategy for planning tourism in Belize (1984:291-303). Because of the different strengthening factors and increasing potential for growth, Belize developed a strong enough infrastructure to support tourism and prosper. The economy differs from Guatemala exponentially, having an exchange rate of 2 Belizean dollars: 1 US dollar. Along the southern coast and the northern cayes, population has increased and prospered.

The first local to approach us was a VERY tall, skinny guide named Beebee. He had short thin dreadlocks and was a boat guide/DJ. He also offered his services, but was extremely subtle and respectful. He taught us the easiest way break open coconuts to mix with our rum. However, the next day he laughed quite a bit that he had forgotten to tell me that coconuts are natural laxatives and a person should really not drink more than four or five coconuts a day. I had somewhere near ten.

One of the biggest social differences between the Belize and Guatemala is the level of host aggressiveness. The people we encountered in the places with greater tourist flow, Placencia, Caye Caulker, Belize City, were much more relaxed and much less pressing on the tourists than in Guatemala. Pearce continues stating, "The population comprises diverse groups of people, with the main ones being creoles, Garifuna, Maya, and mestizos. English is the principal language, but Spanish is widely spoken in the north and west. The use of English gives Belize a unique status in Central America (1984:292)." In correlation with Pearce's statement, I was surprised to find that most Belizeans consider themselves part of the Caribbean rather than Central America. They often referred to Belize as "the island," which it is not.

After hanging out for a day or two, Beebee and his friends began to offer us deals on fishing trips. The people of Placencia were expert fishermen and it was still very strong in their culture. Everyone was getting excited about the upcoming Lobsterfest, a nation wide fishing competition and festival that was held throughout June and July.

Tourists are able to experience this as a part of the culture, not as a fad to attract tourists.

We finally made our way up the coast and back to the Princess Hotel and Casino in Belize City. My feet were completely black on both sides from the burning ground and all kinds of filth I'd rather not think about. The next day we took another ferry out to Caye Caulker. The water was blue and the streets were white. Most people were cheerful and content. Despite the tourist invasion, this place still had a somewhat untouched feeling. Even the tourist metropolis of San Pedro on Ambergris Caye was somewhat tame and had a brighter atmosphere contrary to that of Livingston.

The sanitation and sewer system was developed and controlled and provided a very clean pristine landscape. In Belize, most environmental hot spots for tourists were hurt more by hurricanes or monsoons than the tourists. On Caye Caulker there was only one truck on the island and the streets were china white. We saw how the proper infrastructure provided the tourist spots in Belize with the environmental stability not present in Livingston.

As I stood in the crystal clear waters of Caye Caulker, I emptied a midsize conch shell into my hand to reveal a small bright purple baby octopus. It stuck to my fingers as it floundered around in my hand. I stood in complete amazement as I released the little one back into the water and contemplated on how far my journey had taken me.

Conclusion: From Truck Bed to Bare Feet

In Ron O'grady's book, he incorporates a poem written by Cecil Rajendra from Penang Island, Malaysia (1982:8-9). He writes with extreme conviction:

When the tourists flew in

Our island people
Metamorphosed into
A grotesque carnival
--a two-week sideshow

When the tourists flew in

Our men put aside
their fishing nets
to become waiters
our women became whores

When the tourists flew in

What culture we had
Flew out the window
We traded our customs
For sunglasses and pop
We turned sacred ceremonies
Into ten-cent peep shows...

The poem continues on (p.9) and although this sentiment is not shared by everyone, it shows the magnitude of power which the tourism industry holds. Just as chemists and physicists look for an answer by studying pollution, anthropologists must also look for a solution to the negative affects of the globalization of tourism through dedicated ethnographic research and reliable statistical data. Through this dichotomy, I've expressed how societies can market and sell their own traditions and cultures in order to survive. The invasion of outside influences can cause extreme acculturation and loss of identity as a people. This dichotomy also showed that the infrastructure of a society plays a key role in how that society will develop and adapt to the industry of tourism. Because of the different infrastructures and backgrounds, these two countries were affected by tourism in different ways.

However, the concept of selling a way of life and a living culture is still the universal element behind tourism in both places. Because of the much stronger infrastructure, Belize seemed to embrace tourism with more positive results; while, Guatemala seemed to be swallowed up by it creating extreme socio-economic and environmental problems.

Of course, my experiences led me down my own path because experience in the world is subjective to the individual. The intention of this article is not at all to paint a picture of good and bad. People and places vary all over the world. Belize and Guatemala are no exception. Tourism has become the culture of selling culture. The exploitation of culture and the surrounding environment is perpetual and globalization of the industry seems to make it a universal problem. Culture and the environment in which it exists are very fragile and sacred things. The world community must be extremely careful in the decision to profit off them through selling them to the industry of tourism.

The culture of tourism has evolved many times over and now there is a new generation. With international websites and online forums, travelers are now able to connect and contact each other anywhere in the world. Environmental issues are being pushed more and more to the forefront and a new universal respect could be just around the corner. Globalization of tourism was and is inevitable. Humans want to see their Earth and they deserve to; however, with the privilege of travel and experience comes the responsibility to respect the cultures and societies we humans encounter.

It is absolutely imperative that the anthropological community understand its connection as the “**highest-status form of tourism**” and its obligation to the global community to understand the growing culture of tourism. It is almost a necessity that this industry be studied through the specialized perspective of anthropology. Because this phenomenon crosses all bounds of political, sociological, and physiological study, it is difficult to tackle such a fast evolving culture. However, Anthropology is so closely tied to some of the philosophical concepts of travel and tourism; it is certainly an appropriate and useful lens through which to examine the aspects and future possibilities of tourism and the constantly changing culture of tourism.

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Faculty comment:

Lee Ballard’s mentor, Justin Nolan, had the following things to say about his student’s work:

I have worked closely with Lee throughout the development of this manuscript, which examines the cultural consequences of tourism in the developing nations of Belize and Guatemala. The paper is based on Lee’s observations as a traveler to the region last summer, when he decided to experience first-hand a cultural region that captured his interests during his first semester as a student in my cultural anthropology class.

Lee is an unusually gifted and sensitive scholar, with a remarkable flair for highly creative writing. What impressed me most about the manuscript is its design. Lee chose to interweave the ethnographic “first-person” with the more conventional ethnoscientific “third person” throughout the paper. By pivoting back and forth between the two voices, Lee paints a vivid portrayal of the touring experience through the lens of the student ethnographer. This style, while unorthodox by all accounts, is ultimately highly effective in conveying Lee’s understanding of the impact of visitors upon host societies in

industrializing Central America. I feel strongly that Lee's ideas are clearly articulated and colored with candid wit and anthropological imagination



Streets of Puerto Barrios, Guatemala.. Photograph by Lee Ballard, 2004.



The Tiburon Gato restaurant in Livingston, Guatemala. Photograph by Lee Ballard, 2004



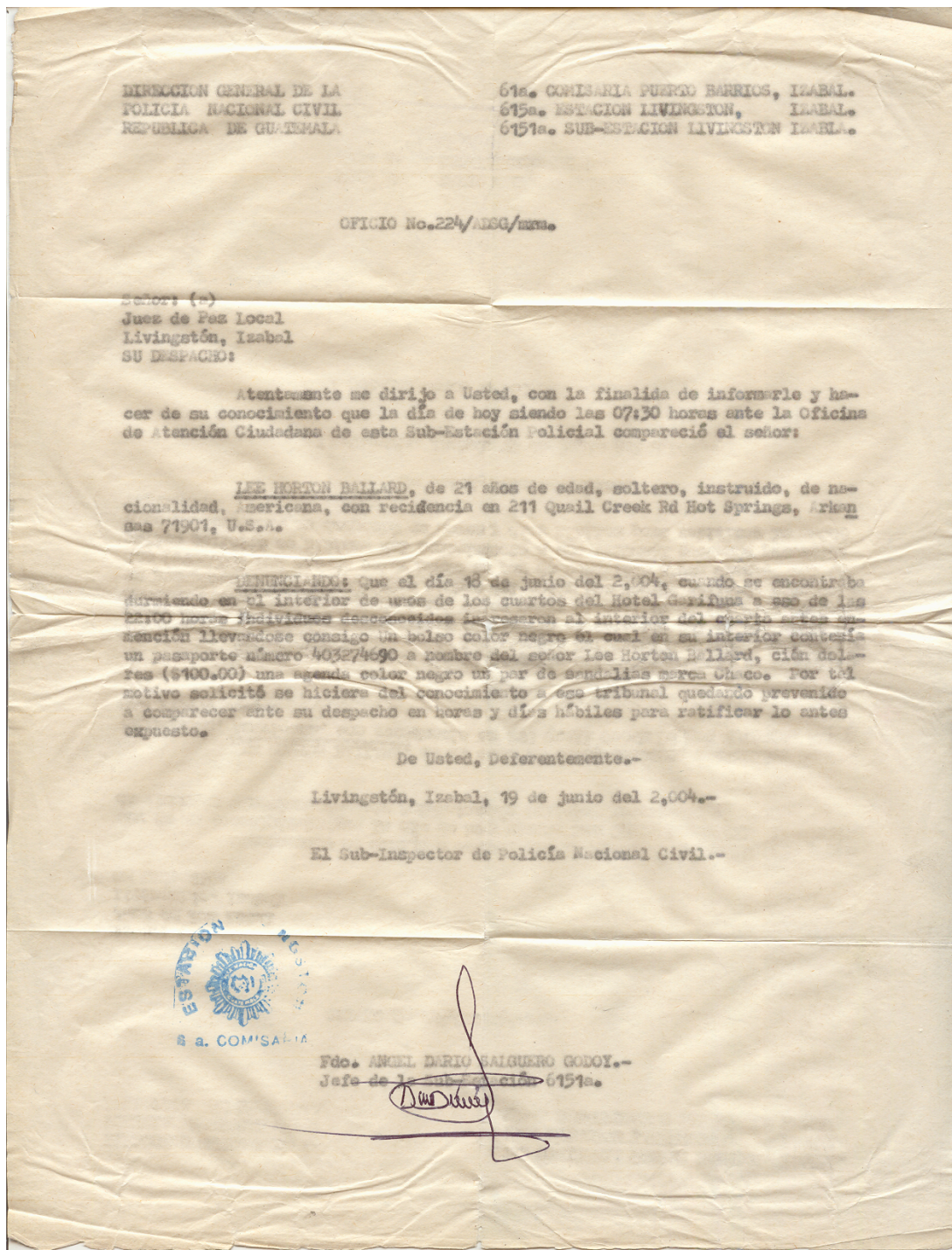
Nate and Jerry at a soccer game in Livingston. Photograph by Lee Ballard, 2004.



Hotel Garifuna in Livingston, shortly after retrieving my passport. Photograph by Lee Ballard, 2004.



Coconut trees in Placencia, Belize after a long adventure. Photograph by Lee Ballard, 2004.



Copy of my police report in Livingston. Photograph by Lee Ballard, 2004.